

74th League of United Latin American Citizens*
National Convention & Exposition
June 16 - June 21, 2003

**“Hispanic Employment Program Managers:”
“Inspired from Within and Leveraging Diversity in USDA”**

The main focus of the meeting circled around the fact that the Hispanic population is now the largest minority group in the U.S.A., but this population is not necessarily represented in USDA's workforce. Increased racial and ethnic diversity is adding a new dimension to everything from product marketing to political campaigning. I attended this conference to participate in Hispanic Manager's Training sessions and other sessions related to Hispanics, people and issues. I also made stops at various booths, including our ARS booth and compared them against each other. I felt the ARS booth had all the makings of a successful venue for attracting potential students to ARS/USDA.

Dr. Harry R. Salinas, Departmental Hispanic Employment Program Manager, was the presenter of the “Inspired from Within and Leveraging Diversity in USDA” session in which he discussed the importance in preparing ourselves and our employees for career and opportunity for professional growth. Dr. Salinas explained and clarified the organizational Workforce Profiles for FY 2002 and 2003 by minority Workforce Profile, and grade levels. For example in Calendar Year 2003 USDA, employee distribution by Grade: Hispanic Women at the GS-15 level counted for only 10 versus their Caucasian counterparts at 363. Caucasian Men: GS-15 level accounted for 1,473 versus 79 African-American Men and only 56 Hispanic Men. These figures were provided to us by the USDA Workforce Profile Handout along with other statistical information. Dr. Salinas, encouraged managers in the audience to develop and support Hispanics by enrolling them in leadership development programs. He stated that the Latino population is still a sleeping giant. Dr. Salinas pointed out a number of developmental programs that are available to various Agencies and reminded us of the importance of outreach to the Hispanic community. There was a panel of guest speakers, some were last minute speakers that came in place of the original speakers, that were unable to attend. Political Campaigning was one of many hot topics that were discussed during various other sessions I attended. The economic impact that the Hispanic community is having is changing everything from food to entertainment, e.g., Dora the Explorer on Nickelodeon is No. 2 pre-school show on commercial TV., and Latin Radio now makes up approximately 7 to 8 % of radio audience. There are approximately 39 million Hispanics, this makes Hispanics the largest minority group, but also makes up targets for glass ceilings and discrimination. A problem is that most Hispanics tend to suffer in silence because of the need to not “call attention to ourselves” as problem employees. Hispanics are less likely to file a lawsuit or EEO complaint because of the repercussions they fear may result if they speak up for themselves.

*Report submitted by Georgina Acosta, Mid South Area Workforce Diversity Committee.

As a result Hispanics, stay in low paying jobs with little or no growth. Everyone on the panel, came to the same agreement that this should not be the case with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. They vowed to make a difference and requested that we as managers/employees do the same to achieve the highest assimilation of Hispanics, GS-level and career wise.

In conclusion, it was awe-inspiring to see how the Hispanic community is pulling together for a greater cause of improvement. However it is realistic to say that much work needs to be done in order to reflect the growing Hispanic population in the Federal Workforce. It is always invigorating and inspiring to speak to the Hispanic youth, who continue to try and make a difference in this world and make a better life for themselves. It is inspiring to hear them say, "I want to make a difference for my people." It energizes me to relate real world issues to real people issues. Attending meetings such as LULAC reaffirms my drive to assimilate diversity in our workforce. For me this was truly a productive and eye-opening conference.